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The Life of Shadows:

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S E R M O N

Principally handling this

Q U E S T I O N,

W H Y,

*The All-wise God should put a Soul into a
Body, to stay in it no longer a Time, as in
the Case of those that Dye in Infancy?*

Design'd for the Comfort of believing
Parents.

L O N D O N :

Printed for John Clark, at the Bible and
Crown in the Old Change. 1706.

Price 4 d.



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The Life of Shadows :

A

Funeral Sermon.

Ecclef. vi. 12.

For who knoweth what is Good for Man in this Life, all the Days of his vain Life which he spendeth as a Shadow? for who can tell a Man what shall be after him under the Sun?

THE Holy Spirit wrote this Book of *Ecclesiastes*, on purpose to acquaint Man with the Vanity of this World, that he might not lose his Soul in the Chase and Pursuit of Shadows, which he can never catch: And the way the Holy Ghost takes, is, to enumerate and reckon up all those Things that

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look most fair and promising; and then to insist particularly on every one of 'em, and shew their utter Insufficiency to make Man happy.

Here in the Context, he is demonstrating the Vanity of Riches, and how invaluable they are in order thereunto. He heaps up several Arguments, the last of which is in Verse 11. *Seeing there be many Things that increase Vanity, what is Man the better?* That is, if as we increase Riches (or any other carnal Enjoyments) we increase Vanity, then they can't remove that Vanity we so complain of, or make us happy under it.

But there is an Objection lies close and silent in the Heart of Man, which by way of Prolepsis or Anticipation is answer'd here. The Objection is this,

Object. There is no need it should be so, sure it is not unavoidably so: Why cannot a Man separate the Good from the Bad? The Comfort that is in the Creatures from the Vanity that is in 'em?

Ans. Such is the Ignorance of Man that he cannot do this: *Who knoweth what is good for Man in this Life?* Solomon sets the Comfort of the Creatures, and the Vanity that is in the Creatures, as two opposite Lines drawn parallel one to another; and intimates that the Vanity is much larger than the Comfort that is in any Enjoyment: And such is the Folly, and Weakness, and Unskilfulness of Man, that he cannot draw the Comfort out of any Creature, without drawing the Vanity along with it at the same time.

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But then the Question recoils upon us still unanswered: Whence is it, that Man is so Ignorant that he cannot do this?

I. From the Brevity and Shortness of Life; by that time a Man has learn'd to Live he must Dye: Traditional Knowledge he has indeed, but that is a poor cold uncertain Thing, which at best only teaches us to methodize our Thoughts, and regulate our Conceptions of Things; but does not at all, no, not at all better the Heart: And then as for that Knowledge which is experimental, he does not live long enough to get much of that, *Job. 8. 9. For we are but of Yesterday, and know nothing, because our Days upon Earth are a Shadow.* So in the Text, his *vain Life is quickly spent as a Shadow.*

II. His want of Foresight of what may fall out: *For who can tell a Man what shall be after him under the Sun?* Hence Men are at a great loss in the Management of their Affairs, and we do that to Day which we would gladly have undone again to Morrow.

But it is the Description here of the Life of Man, that I purpose to dwell most upon. Where I take notice,

1. How the Spirit of God numbers, and so teaches us to number our Life by Days, not by Ages, not by Lustres (as the old Romans did) but by Days, as good old Jacob did, *Gen. 47. 9. And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the Days of the Years of my Pilgrimage, are an Hundred and Thirty Years: Few and Evil have the Days of the Years of my Life*

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Life been, and have not attain'd unto the Days of the Tears of the Life of my Fathers, in the Days of their Pilgrimage. Again, Ps. 90. 12. So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.

2. The Vanity of it, *His vain Life.* So Eccles. 11. 10. *Childhood and Youth are Vanity.* But why does he single out only these two Periods of Life? Answer, If any Stages or Periods of Life be free from toilsome Vanity, sure these are; for these complain the least of it: But these are Vanity, therefore the rest are much more so.

III. 'Tis shadowing spent without any real or solid Good; 'tis all Emptiness and can yield no Satisfaction to the Mind of Man. Ps. 39. 6. *Surely every Man walketh in a vain shew, surely they are disquieted in Vain, &c.*

Thus of the Division and Explication of the Words.

Observ. 1. No Man, even the wisest, knows what is good for him in this World; whether to be Rich or Poor, Learn'd or Unlearn'd, to have many Children or few, or none at all: To have much Business or little, to be Full or Empty. Psal. 78. 29, 30, 31. *So they did Eat, and were well fill'd, for he gave them their own Desire. They were not estrang'd from their Lust; but while their Meat was yet in their Mouths, the Wrath of God came upon them, &c.* The Soul of Man is a Sponge of Desires, never full, because always emptying it self that it may fill again; it thirsts exceedingly after Happiness; we will be happy and may be

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so, for God offers to make his People happy in himself: No! but this will not do, we will be happy, and we will be so in our own way; we will have the Creatures make up an Happiness to us, which they can never do, but they cause us rather to Sin. Sometimes they breed Sorrow in an unseen and unaccountable Way; and if we will take our Range among the Creatures, they will in time prove our Ruin: *None knows what is good for him.* The Policy of *Ahitophel* ruin'd him, and so *Nabal's* Estate did him, *Haman's* Ambition and Heighth was his undoing, *Diotrephes's* Honour and Esteem among Christians, *Sodom's* Plenty, *Delilah's* Beauty, prov'd woful Snares to them: Happy had some been had they been but moderately Rich, indifferently Handsome; or Esteem'd, but not Admir'd: But Extrems are generally Fatal.

Let me before I pass from hence, make this short Reflection, O what a mighty Check should this Truth be to our extravagant roving Desires! *Eccl. 6. 9. Better is the Sight of the Eyes, than the Wandering of the Desires.* That is, 'tis better to enjoy comfortably what we have, than to be insatiable and restless in our Desires after what we have not: Nor is there any end of it: Grace and Nature too may be satisfy'd, but Corruption never.

Does no Man know what is good for him? Then what an Argument is this for Contentment? Why should I not count then, that my present Condition is good, is best for me? But says vain Man, I will change and make my Fortune: Why! Is not the Road to Preferment as free for me, as the King's High-way? But hold Friend! cease thy Raving, and let us calmly argue the Case a little.

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Why art thou not easie in thy present State? Why so resolv'd to change it? (for that which is better thou sayest): But I ask again, How thou knowest it will be so? It is far more likely to be worse; that can never prosper with us which we run upon without God's leave: We should always let his Will go first, thy Place is to follow: But know, O Man! that Things always go just so as God would have them go, and they can go no otherwise; and seeing infinite Wisdom manages and governs all Wheels in this lower World, they can be no better than they are.

This after all is the Rise and Spring of the Creature's Satisfaction: Infinite Wisdom and Goodness have chose this Place for me, and planted me here; and if this does not set me at rest, I may be uneasie even in Heaven it self: For there some will be Higher than others, more Beautiful than others, and some of thy Inferiours on Earth, may, and 'tis very likely, will sit nearer to Jesus Christ in Heaven than thou.

Observ. 2. Life is a poor vain Thing not worth desiring or keeping, were it not in meer Obedience to the Sovereign Lord of Life, who may set his Creatures under what Scenes of Action he pleases.

A poor vain Thing in it self, and made more so by the Folly and Sin of Man: Nay, Man seldom knows how to demean himself in Life, till he begins to feel himself a Dying, and is almost got to the end of Life.

If a Man be Ignorant, he is like a blinded Man, dash'd against every Stone or Post: If he be Learn'd, he sees by it more of his Ignorance, and how vain and poor a Thing all Knowledge is, in
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that it cannot heal one spiritual Distemper the Soul feels and complains of. The poor Man is distracted with Fears and Cares his Poverty brings upon him, whilst the Rich are at the same time distracted as much with their vain Pleasures. If a Man be Mean, he is despis'd; if Eminent, then enviy'd; if Valu'd and Lov'd by one Party, for that very reason he shall be Disesteem'd by another: *All Things are full of Vanity, Man cannot utter it.* There is nothing better for a Man that would pass calmly thro' the Plain of this Life, than to go aside, and as much as may be, draw the Curtains between the World and his Soul, to hide himself with God, to make this his principal Aim every Day, to keep up a stated delightful Commerce and Fellowship with God: This is the sweetest Life thou canst taste on this side Heaven; and besides the sweetness, here will be also this farther Advantage accruing from it, Thou wilt not desire that which others desire and cannot attain: Those inward and disorder'd Inclinations in thy Heart will be absorb'd and swallow'd up, in those Contentments and better Pleasures that are to be found in God.

Observ. 3. It seems good to the Divine Wisdom, to conceal from Man what lies in the Womb of Providence, and to hide from him the Knowledge of what is to come after him under the Sun.

1. No Man whatever he may pretend, can know infallibly what is to be after him; this very Text blows up judiciary Astrology, condemning it as futilous and vain; for supposing that the *ἐνταλτα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*, or the benign Influence of the Heavens

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venly Bodies should beget a good Constitution of Body, and that good bodily Constitution should beget good Dispositions and Inclinations; and so on the contrary, * supposing that a malign Influence of the heavenly Bodies should beget an ill Constitution of Body, and that evil Constitution should beget evil Dispositions and Inclinations, yet here the Chain is broken off; and since this extends no farther than a natural Inclination, does not necessarily produce such or such Actions, being alterable by Custom, Education, and infinite external Impediments; but especially by the Grace of God; it cannot be an infallible ground of the Fore-knowledge of Things to come; and they that press and carry this Point farther, not only strip Man of his native Liberty, and lay him under a fatal necessity, but exclude the Providence of God out of the Government of the World; and may be as Criminal in the sight of God, as they who gave a full and complete Worship to the Host of Heaven under the Old Testament.

2. It is the Prerogative of God alone to fore-know Things; therefore, says he, in *Isai.* 41. 21, 22, 23. *Shew the Things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods.* Then *Isai.* 43. 9. as also Chap. 48. 5, 6, 7. He then that can pretend to this must be God: The eternal sovereign God himself will allow him to be so.

3. Yet Man is very prone to this, to be enquiring and searching into futurity, as he in *Plutarch* was the more desirous to know what was that in the Basket, because it was cover'd: But he was

* *In the Life of the Learn'd Joseph Mede, pag. 9.*

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rightly answer'd, It was therefore cover'd that it might not be known: The Lord Christ checks and forbids us this anxious Sollicitude and Care about the Things of to Morrow, and upon good reasons, among which this may be one; We never take upon us to step into the Divine Province, and go about to direct God, but we do at the same time neglect something that concerns our selves.

4. It would be vain and useles to him, did he foreknow what was to fall out, for he would not order his Affairs one jot the better.

Object. O! Yes, surely if a Man knew he was to Die to Morrow, he would be very Serious to Day. Answer, 'Tis all mistake; you have an Instance in *Saul*, he believ'd he should Die on the Morrow, yet falls upon his own Sword and Dies in Self-murder.

5. It is the vouchsafement of God in Mercy to us, to hide from us Things to come. O! How should we be continually rackt with the Forethoughts of approaching Evils, and the various Calamities of Life? Now we only bear them when they come, but if we knew them beforehand, we should bear 'em many Years before they actually came upon us, and then too when they did come: So that our Strength would be spent, and worn out before the time, and consequently we must sink under 'em when they did come.

Vain Man! To be solicitous about Things to come Forty or Fifty Years hence, and not at all to regard thy present Steps. O! but what shall my Children do hereafter? Nay, but, O Man! rather see thou to carry it well towards God in

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this thy Day, *Deut.* 12. 28. that they may fare the better, *Observe and hear all these Words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy Children after thee for ever; when thou dost that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord for ever.* Lay up an Estate; it may be soon squander'd away: *Solomon* left his Son *Jeroboam*, a Kingdom; but had *Solomon* himself walk'd more uprightly with God, his Son had been a greater and happier Prince. Thou hast nothing to leave thy Child; leave it an Interest in the Promises of God, and thy Child shall do well. It is not thy Skill that maintains thy Family, the wise and bountiful Lord of the Universe feeds both thee and them; the World has ever been a feeble Thing, and so God will have it be, that it may be evident, that he upholds it with his own powerful Arm.

Doct. *This mortal Life is a Life of Shadows.*

Here,

First, I would make out the Point:

Secondly, Inquire into the Causes and Reasons of the brevity of Human Life.

Thirdly, Answer this Question, what Account may be given of this Dispensation of God, why he should put Souls into Bodies to stay no longer in them.

Fourthly, Apply it.

I would in the first place make out this Point.

I. The World is a World of Shadows, and all the carnal Enjoyments in it are no better; they are but Shadows or Resemblances of something better in the invisible spiritual World; even as

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the Mosaick Types are call'd Shadows of good Things to come, *Colos. 2. 18. Hebrews 8. 5.* The evil Things of this World, are but Maps of the evil Things in the other World, *2 Peter 2. 6. Making them an Example.* The good Things of this World, are a Map of those good Things in the State of Light and Blessedness to be reveal'd, *Romans 5. 14.* The first *Adam* was there a Type of the second *Adam*; and the World of the first *Adam* a representation of the second *Adam's* World that he should bring in, and the eternal good Things of it. Thus God would instruct us by the very natural Actions of Life, and the Enjoyments that strike our Senses to rise up from this World, and lay hold on that to come: Do these outward Things please? O! how Sweet then are those Joys that are laid up for those that fear thee before the Sons of Men? Do the soft Notes of Musick charm my Ear? O! how Delightful then, O my Soul, is the Melody that fills the Conscience at the heavenly Feast? And that drops from the Harps and Viols of the Saints above?

II. Man's Life is a Life of Shadows.

Whether you Respect,

1. The shortness of it, *1 Chron. 29. 15. For we are Strangers before thee, and Sojourners, as were all our Fathers: Our Days on Earth are as a Shadow, and there is none abiding.* Again, *Job 8. 9. We are but of Yesterday, and know nothing, because our Days upon Earth are a Shadow.* Nay I might add, that Man himself is but a flying Shadow, *Job 14. 2. He fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not.* He spake there of the Day shadow, which is made by any dark Body interposing between us and the Sun:

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Sun: You see a Shadow, but cannot promise its stay, or fix it there for a Minute; now it is, and then it is not, as the Sun appears or disappears: The Sun chases and drives the Shadow before it all Day long, that it cannot keep its Place a moment. Just such a thing is Man.

2. Or whether you respect the Vanity of Life, every Man at his best Estate is altogether Vanity. Again, Psalm 144. 4. *Man is like to Vanity, his Days are as a Shadow which passes away.* Thou art apt to promise thy self something in this or that Enjoyment, but upon trial thou canst find nothing in them, they are Emptiness and Dissatisfaction; thou may'st as well expect to make a good Meal upon the Wind, or make thee a warm Garment of Shadows, as to find that which will satisfy among all the Creatures.

II. I would inquire into the Causes or Reasons, of the Shortness and Vanity of human Life.

1. One is God's just Anger, Psalm 90. 7. *For we are consum'd by thine Anger, and by thy Wrath are we troubled.* Upon Man's first Sin the Curse enter'd upon the World, and upon some particular actual Sins, an additional Curse oft-times takes hold of the Sinner's Person or Family still; as in the Case of Cain, though the Ground was Curs'd before upon his Father Adam's Transgression, another new and additional Curse came upon it, for his Murder of his Brother Abel; and we may find it at this Day by sad Experience, that some new Crime fastens upon some Men, some new Affliction that they can never more recover themselves from under in this World. This Curse of God is as Rottenness in all Creature Comforts;

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this makes them empty and unsatisfying : Hence it is, they spend no better whilst we have them, or else so soon wither in our Hands. Hence Men complain of the Creature, *That the Bed is too short to stretch themselves upon, and the Covering too narrow to wrap themselves in,* as the Prophet *Isaiah* speaks. Complain they do of the Creatures Vanity and Vexation, but will not see or understand how far their own personal Sins may and do oft times tend to the making it so.

Object. But some good Men profess they have enough.

Ans. True, but it is in prospect of something better in an eternal World, that has cur'd their Eagerness after the Enjoyments of this.

Object. But even *Esau* professes the same, I have enough my Brother, keep that thou hast.

Ans. It was spoke in a way of Boast and Triumph, that the Supplanter could not hurt him ; he was Richer than *Jacob*, although he unfairly got the Blessing from him.

2. Our Sinfulness, *Psalms* 90. 8. *Thou hast set our Iniquities before thee, our secret Sins in the light of thy Countenance.*

1. Some Sins in their own Nature tend to destroy our Health, to blow up the Lives of Men, as Intemperance, Sensuality, impure Lusts or immoderate Passions, as Fear, Care, Sorrow, Anger, we may fret out or sap out the Thread of Life : They are two good Rules given by the wise School of *Salerna* to our King *Richard I.* as he past by them to the *Holy Land.*

—*si vis te reddere sanum,
Curas tolle graves, Irasci crede profanum.*

2. There are some gygantic Sins, which in a peculiar manner send a Challenge to Divine Justice, and defie him that sits upon the Throne: These Sins by the Heinousness of them, and the Aggravations attending them, provoke God, and indeed oblige him to rise up in vindication of himself. Some Sins the Prophet *Micah* calls mighty Sins, as the Sins of *Onan*, *Gen.* 38. 9, 10. and all Sins against Nature, *Rom.* 1. do: Thus some may be cut off for Sin in this our Day, altho' we know it not.

III. To give some account of this Dispensation, why does it please God to send Souls into Bodies, to stay in them no longer time.

Answ. In general, we know little of the Laws of the invisible World; they will concern us when we are in it, but not till then; if we did, we might easily account for many of those *δυσκόνητα*, which so puzzle and perplex us now; but there is no danger if we step warily, and give no more into the Answer than what is plain.

But more particularly,

1. The Souls of Infants are of the same divine Extract, of the same noble Original, with the Souls of grown Persons: They are Sparks from Heaven, sent down to animate an earthly Clod for a few Days; only the Indisposition of bodily Organs, renders them incapable of Understanding and Acting as those that are grown. We may easily conceive of this, by Indisposition, which we

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sometimes bring upon our selves by Intemperance at our Table, or by over-great Weariness, or the like: The Soul cannot act pleasantly till it be recover'd from that Indisposition. To go on: We may not despise these little ones, because they are Young and Helpless, but are to think honourably of them, as of the purest part of the Church of God.

2. The Dispensation of God's Covenant is alter'd, the Frame of it somewhat chang'd from what it was; under the Old Testament it stood in the midst of temporal Promises, Promises of Prosperity. Now in the midst of spiritual Promises, Promises of Affliction; and very observable it is, that Afflictions are the matter of Promises. *Paul* glories in his Bonds, and tells *Agrippa*, that he did not desire to change States with him; he did not say, *I wish I was in your Place*, *Acts* 26. 29. But that you and the whole Court *were as I am, except my Bonds*. But not to digress. So, long Life was then promis'd as a Blessing, as it was a Shadow of a bless'd Eternity; but now, since the Death of Christ, we can see more clearly into Heaven without such Shadows, since the Lord Christ has brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel; the Spirit of Fear and Bondage did more reign then; the Spirit of Adoption more now. Hence it is not (through Riches of Grace) a thing very unusual for Souls to long for Death, and to rejoice in the view and prospect of the Grave.

3. We must consider the Church of God as Christ's Body, and each Christian as a Member of it: There are Angels: Again, there are grown Christians, that have liv'd out their Days, and there

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are Infants that have just stept into a Body, to be inroll'd among the Saints, and then ascended.

God has in his wise Decree, laid out every ones Portion; some have great active Services assign'd them, and others have greater and harder Lessons of passive Obedience to take out. Again, there are others as we see, that have none of these laid upon them; who consequently having no business in this World of ours, are to stay but a little time here; but are call'd for up the sooner into the World of Glory: The Lord Christ himself would not stay long upon Earth; when his Work was done he goes next way to Heaven. So God having not laid out much for some little ones, either to do or suffer, their Work is soon done, and they soon ripe for Heaven.

4. That he might by such Instances give a Demonstration of a future State, and keep up a full Sense of it upon the Minds of Men, *Elijah* was translated, and so are our little ones every Day: Did not Men ask one another, think you what was become of *Elijah*? He was one of the best Friends God had on Earth, and if God has taken him away out of this, certainly he hath some other better World where to bestow him, some better place provided for him: Just the same way should our Thoughts work, when God takes from us our little Babes.

5. That by taking us to Heaven by Piece-meal, the Lord might effectually spiritualize us that stay behind; the World is oft-times weary of old Age; but as to our Buds they are our Love, and Hope, and Joy. These dear Treasures of our Blood are gone; and we cannot forbear ascending after them in our Thoughts; and this is what God designs by their Death to draw us, and make even our natural Affections serviceable to our heavenly Inter-

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rest; for we need all kinds of Help, (such is our Sluggishness) and the Death of every near Friend, opens to us a glade into the eternal World. They have no Business here, or but very little, and therefore were not to stay long: The Place is not good enough for them, the Lord Christ thinks so meanly of this World, as that he will not have his, stay any longer than need, to be defil'd and vex'd by it.

IV. The Application.

1. What a poor thing is Life, that we are generally so fond of? We best see Things in God's Light, therefore let us view it as the Scripture represents and sets it out; it is compar'd to a Shadow, to a Weaver's Shuttle, to a Post, to a swift Ship, to an hungry Eagle, *Job* 9. 26. to a Vapour, *James* 4. to a Shepherd's Tent, *Isai.* 38. 12. to a Flower of the Field, *Psf.* 103. 15, 16. That has nothing to defend it, but lies open to the Weather; yet this short Life is us'd by Men as a mere Amusement, *Psf.* 90. 9. *We spend our Life as a Tale that is told.* We listen Affectionately while it is telling over, but slight the Tale that is told, and refuse to hear it a second time.

2. Is Life so short, so desultory and precarious a Thing? Then it is high time to awaken, *Rom.* 13. 14. Man! Do not burn the Day: Do not squander away thy Time in Idleness: Do not shorten it by Intemperance or any other Sin: Do not drown thy self in worldly Cares: Do not for Shadows lose the Substance, even everlasting Life and Glory: Be more diligent in spiritual Things: Read, Hear, Pray, Improve this shadowy Life to the best Advantages, 'tis vanishing even whilst thou art reading this.

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3. Never disquiet thy self more about mere Shadows, *Pf. 39. He disquiets himself in vain.* In vain indeed! For either he misses what he aims at, or when he grasps it, finds it Vanity. O my Soul! That thou couldst once fix it in thy Judgment, and walk under the savory Influence of this Truth; that even the best of these Things we dayly converse with, are not worth our Grief nor worth our Joy. Constancy is a Shadow of God's unchangableness, and not to be mov'd by Crosses or Incidencies of Life is God-like.*

Contentedly, Calmly, Thankfully, enjoy the present Gifts of Providence, without vexing thy self with Thoughts of Things to come: Use what thou hast: Trust God: Live comfortably upon Providence. Such is the Vanity of this Life, that there is not the least thing in it, but can produce Disappointment and Vexation enough, to imbitter all thy Joys, be they never so high and well fixt. "Soul! Why dost not thou instruct thy self thus?" "Why should I linger after, or long to borrow that of another, than which, if I can but by Grace correct my own Fancy, I have better at Home?"

4. Converse warily with Men as with so many walking Shadows; that may, nay, that must and will change, because they are Creatures: They Love to Day, they Hate to Morrow, *Isai. 32. 3.* They that strengthen themselves in the Strength of *Pharaoh*, altho' a mighty King, yet trust but in a Shadow: We should learn to trust none unlimitedly, but God himself. Again, converse less and less with Men, and more and more with God. Divine Converse purifies our Minds and Hearts, as Converse with Men too often defiles them. We

* *Nobile est Deoque Vicinam non concuti.* Sen.

are oft times worse by our acquaintance with Men, but always better by acquainting our selves with God, *Job 22. 21. Acquaint now thy self with him, and be at Peace, thereby Good shall come unto thee.*

The Life of a worldly Man is a poor sordid beggarly Life; he borrows a little Comfort of this Creature, and a little of that, which oftner vexes him too than pleases him: Tho' they more often please than profit him. Is it not a poor Life? Who would stand to the Courtesie of a Thousand Creatures, when he might be more Happy without them in one God? When he might live upon the Fountain of Peace and Joy, and might call all this his own?

5. It is no Wonder at all, that Shadows vanish and disappear. Do Parents lose their little Babes? It is a Wonder that Life, so brittle a Thing, should last much longer than a Bubble: Thou hast no reason to Afflict thy self, God Comforts Souls by shewing them Reason why they should be Comforted. So on the other hand, we should not Afflict our selves without Reason: But to direct thee in thy Deportment in this Case.

Doct. 1. Consider that the Relation between thee and them is ceas'd, and blotted out in the Dust: Think of them no longer as thy Children, but as Saints before the Throne, that know more of God than thou dost. Their Thoughts are as far above thine now, as thy Thoughts were above theirs lately, when on Earth; they are ripen'd for Heaven before thee, and are now become thy Patterns: Thou art to take up high and honourable Thoughts of them, and art to be quicken'd in Obedience to God by such Thoughts as these.

2. Remember God's Propriety in them, they are more his than yours. *ALL SOULS ARE MINE.*

MINE. God put them out a little while to Nurse, and may send for them Home when he pleases : What right have you to be Crying thus after them, as *Phaltiel* after *Michal*, *Saul's* Daughter? *2 Sam. 3. 16.* It would be more acceptable to God, and comfortable to our selves that are Parents, if we did look more to the Education of our Children while they are with us ; and did less Lament and Weep over their Coffins when remov'd from us. Nay, we should rather be pleas'd that their Hazards, and our own Fears concerning them, are over ; which would never have been during their Abode here.

3. Rejoice and be thankful that God should make choice of any of thine, wherewith to People his Heaven. *Abraham, Gen. 25. 1.* Accounted it a Blessing to People the Earth, tho' that Seed were excluded the Covenant. *In Isaac shall thy Seed be call'd.* How much more then to People Heaven? Now that God should so quickly send for them up to his Heavenly Court, before they have desir'd their Garments as we have done ; should be matter of Joy to us.

Christian ! Why dost thou Mourn ?

Answ. O it was a Child of great Hopes.

I Reply, thou couldst only hope at the best, to meet him in Heaven ; and since he is safely landed there, one half of thy Hopes is already attain'd. Now as to what relates to thy own Soul, turn thy Sorrow inward upon thy self : See that thou miss not thy own way to him.

Object. O ! But you speak of the Thing as a certainty that they are in Heaven, but that is the Thing I doubt of.

Answ. But thou hast no reason to doubt it (I am speaking to Gracious Parents) *I shall*, says *David*,

The Life of Shadows.

23

Go to him, but he shall not return to me. I observe that *David* spake this of a Child born under a criminal Blot, as if he would thereby instruct us, that the way God had taken for the Salvation of our Selves and our Seed, is not a precarious, uncertain Way, that may hit or miss. *David* was assur'd, (and surely he would not take up that Assurance upon slight grounds) as to the Point in hand, I mean the Salvation of his Child, *Rom. 5.* The second *Adam* is more potent to Save, than the first was to Destroy. If all that stand under the first *Adam's* Covenant unavoidably Perish, all that stand under the Covenant of the second *Adam* shall infallibly be Sav'd. *Rom. 5. last.* *As Sin hath reign'd unto Death, even so might Grace reign through Righteousness unto eternal Life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Lastly, Glory absorbs or drinks up all natural Affections, or changes them into Spiritual. Thy Child thinks no more of thee as a Father or a Mother; but it thinks of thee as of one that is waiting at the Door: O! then make hast to Spiritualize thy Affections (thy Child has done it already) and thy Eyes will dry the faster. When you gave up your selves to God in Conversion, if you were sincere, you gave up your All to Him: Now let me borrow the Words of *Balaam* to *Balak*, *Num. 23. 3.* *Stand by thy burnt Offering.* I mean, own steddily what thou hast done.

Think more basely of this Cabul, this dirty turbulent World. Shall that have thy Heart, which God did not think worth thy Child's Foot to tread upon any longer? What shall I hug a Dunghill? Thus thus O Man! Skrew up thy Mind into a heavenly Frame: Thou art a loser if not made more Heavenly by this stroke. O think more Pleasantly of Heaven and those upper Regions. Old *Jacob*

cob

cob under the suppos'd Death of his belov'd *Joseph*, talks more of the Grave than ever. The less Care thou hast upon thy Hand for others, the more thou mayst expend upon thy self. This great World is but a blazing Comet, that will soon go out in Snuffs: Learn to flight its Joys and Sorrows now; unless thou canst soar above it, thou wilt find something or other in it always to disturb, that thou shalt have no rest here. Do not we hear the Lord Christ calling after us? Souls, *I ascend to my Father and your Father, John 14. To my God and your God.* Come then let us ascend with him; and while we are ascending, the nearer we come to Heaven, the more all the Troubles, as well as all the Glories and Concerns of this World, will go out of Sight.



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